1962 UFO Sighting: Walsh Park, Springfield, Delaware County, Pennsylvania
By: Carla Welsh
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Photo taken by the author of Walsh Park during recent wildfire smoke and haze that blew into the area. Spaceship jokingly inserted to set the mood!

On April 24, 1962, a very credible UFO sighting was reported by Joseph and Alice Gasslein, of 148 Schuyler Road. The report describes a wooded area near their home, which was Walsh Park. The sighting was later included in RAND Corporation's 1968 report, *UFOs: What to Do?* The report wasn't claiming that UFOs were alien spacecraft. Instead, it discussed how scientists should investigate UFO reports and used the Springfield case as an example of a high-quality sighting.

According to the report, the case stood out because there were multiple witnesses; the object was observed under good conditions; several witnesses independently drew similar sketches; at least 15 people reportedly saw it; and it was described as moving slowly and silently.

Joseph Gasslein wasn't just an ordinary eyewitness. He was a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and had previously worked for Kellett Aircraft, where he supervised final testing of the experimental XH-10 helicopter at Central Airport in Camden in 1949. With a military aviation background and experience around experimental aircraft, he would have been very familiar with conventional aircraft. Per June 22, 1962 Delaware County Daily Times real estate transfer notice, Joseph and Alice sold their Schuyler Road home just a couple of months after the sighting.

Interestingly, only about a mile away, during the 1950s, the area behind what is now Cardinal O'Hara High School was the site of a U.S. Army Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battery. The site included an underground ammunition bunker and was dismantled around 1959. Cardinal O'Hara High School was built on the property around 1963. Whether the former military site had any connection to what was seen that day is unknown. Still, it adds an interesting layer to the story: a UFO sighting investigated as a particularly credible case occurred only about a mile from a former U.S. Army anti-aircraft installation.

The RAND report never concludes what the object was. It simply presents the Springfield sighting as one of the better-documented UFO reports that deserved further scientific study. Whether it had a conventional explanation or not remains unknown, but it's fascinating that one of the most well-documented UFO cases of the era happened right here in Springfield.

In July 2026, the daughter of one of the reported witnesses contacted the author about the Springfield sighting. She stated that her mother was the “young female neighbor” identified in one of the reports and was approximately 20 years old at the time. According to the daughter, her mother was a close friend of the Gasslein family. She also recalled that Mr. Gasslein later taught Spanish at Thornbury Elementary School and would tell his students about the UFO (UAP) encounter on the last day of class before summer vacation. She emphasized that her mother and others had witnessed the encounter at close range.

The following are select pages from the declassified RAND report, made available through The Black Vault.

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UFOs: What to Do?

George Kocher

DRU-1571

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PART 3: UFOs -- THE CHARACTER OF REPORTS

Any collection of reports of unknown aerial sightings by the public will include a large percent of noise - sightings of something explainable. The reports are made because the appearance falls outside the range of the observer's experience, and the observer believes it is sufficiently anomalous to warrant the attention of authorities. Thus, any large collection of reports will include descriptions of aircraft, balloons, spacecraft, astronomical objects, atmospheric effects and the like. Often the practiced and perceptive analyst can recognize the stimulus, particularly if he has access to records of aircraft, balloon, and satellite movements, meteorological data and astronomical phenomenology. Recognition of stimulus is aided by a high quality report which is as quantitative as possible and which shows the observer to be able to differentiate between observation and interpretation. Of course a number of reports will be so lacking in details that no conclusion can be reached about what was seen. These are of little use; they may, however, serve as corroborating evidence to another, higher quality, report and should not, therefore be rejected. The really interesting class of reports is that reporting phenomenology which is clearly extraordinary. The observer's qualifications may be such that the report is not only highly credible but is articulate and quantitative as well. It is this subclass of reports, variously estimated at 5 to 20 percent of the total, that offer hope of our learning what is going on.

Hynek considers two parameters of reports, credibility and strangeness, and suggests that the investigator really needs only to be concerned with reports having high strangeness and high credibility. The physical scientist is in a position to evaluate strangeness, the social scientist should be able to provide some measure of credibility. Hynek also comments on a number of beliefs about UFOs and reports stating,[18] among other things, that most reports are made by people who previously never gave much thought to UFOs; that reports are not always vague; and that well educated, well trained, reliable, stable people also contribute reports. These conclusions have been reached by most people who have taken the trouble to collect and investigate reports first hand.

To illustrate the character of reports, I will quote several narratives from the literature. (Narratives, of course, are just the beginning of any report. Quantitative information, usually not given in the narrative must be obtained by careful interview of the witness.) The first is taken from a collection of 160 reports by Olsen.[19] It was originally made to NICAP.

Date: 24 April 1962

Place: Springfield (Delaware County), Pennsylvania

First witness, J. A. Gasslein, Jr. (Lt. Colonel, USAR Ret.) reports:

"Time: Approximately 1945 hours, weather: clear, cloudless, medium blue sky, visibility good.

"My wife was driving her mother home following the latter's visit to our home. They had driven around the block to higher ground when my wife's mother looked out the car window and saw a large object. It was moving slowly and silently in an east-to-west direction at not over 50 ft. above street level. (Determined by the proximity to and relationship to the size of the Cape-Cod-type bungalows over which the object was passing.) My wife then plainly saw the object herself.

"Anxious to have me see the object, my wife quickly drove the car back to our house and attracted my attention. I had been working in the basement. I ran out of the house and up the street for a view. By the time I saw it, the object appeared to be about a quarter to a half-mile away, moving in a westerly direction. I saw it as an object smaller at the top than at the base, seemingly suspended in the air at an angle of about 45 degrees from my position, and giving off colored lights. I know that the object was not any kind of conventional aircraft of balloon.

"Having had the advantage of a closer viewing than I, my wife describes the object as follows..

" 'The UFO appeared to be about the size of one of the Cape Cod houses over which it passed, which would make it approximately 30 ft. in diameter and about the same dimension in height. It was circular, surmounted by a dome giving off flashes of green light. The center section rotated a series of square shaped "windows", each giving off a brilliant white light. The base section was somewhat saucer-shaped,

curved upward. Shafts of white light were directed downward from the base.' Unfortunately, my wife cannot recall if the exterior was metallic in appearance. In any event, the object had a well-defined outline. Again, it moved silently. There was no evidence of occupants of the UFO.

"Approximately 20 to 25 minutes following the first sighting described above, the following sighting occured:

"Returning from taking her mother home, my wife drove the car into our driveway alongside the house, headed westward. In the rear of our home was a wooded park area. My wife walked down the driveway to enter the house. Coming up the driveway was a neighbor friend, a young lady 20 years of age. In a tone of astonishment, she called my wife's attention to the park area, from which was emerging an object of the same description as outlined above moving easterly at low level - not over 50 ft. above ground level, as judged by the trees in the area -- the UFO proceded relatively slowly and without sound. It was approaching the rear of our home and adjacent properties.

"Again, my wife called me from the basement. By the time I got outside, the object had made a 90 degree turn northward and was proceeding parallel to the backs of the houses in the same line as ours. It was perhaps 150 - 200 yards distant. My observation of the characteristics of the UFO tallied with my wife's and the young lady's. Each of them independently made a pencil sketch within a few minutes after the sighting, and the sketches were substantially alike.

"All told, there were at least 15 persons in the vicinity who acknowledged seeing the object at about the same time as the sightings made by my wife and myself."

Another witness, P. T. Scattergood, reports:

"Around 8 (p.m.) I stepped out the front door, facing south and saw a brilliantly lighted object low in the southern sky. At first I took it to be a jet taking off from Philadelphia Airport, which is in that general direction. But I could hear no engine noise and it was traveling too slowly to be a plane. Also it did not have the usual blinking lights.

"It appeared to have a row of yellowish lights (which I took for the windows of the "jet") with a clear green light at the top. As I

watched, the row of lights appeared to be obscured as though a large paddle-wheel were revolving and blotting them out, beginning with the rear lights and proceeding forward. Since the object was moving west, I saw the right hand side of it. The periodic appearance and disappearance of the lights was perfectly regular. The top green light was constantly visible. I stood on the pavement and watched the object sail leisurely to the west until it disappeared behind some trees. The observation probably lasted from 5 to 10 minutes."

This report has the desirable features of the UFO being seen by a number of people (about 15) of which two actually made reports. (Hynek estimates the number of sightings to be about 10 times the number of reports turned in). Other desirable aspects of this sighting are that it was made during daylight; that it was near enough that some details of its configuration were observable; and, it was visible long enough to allow the observers to consider "explanations" as they watched it.

18. Science, 21 October 1966, letter by J. A. Hynek, p. 329

19. The Reference for Outstanding UFO Sighting Reports, T. M. Olsen, UFO Information Retrieval Center, Inc., Box 57, Riderwood, Md. 21139

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